

What is claimed is:

1. A segmented arm support apparatus for attachment to a surgical retractor, comprising:
  - an articulating arm having a plurality of segments, each segment having an outer wall and an inner surface with a passage extending through each segment, the outer wall of a first segment in mating relationship with the inner surface of a second segment, each segment being formed of a material with high stiffness coated with a high friction plating material;
  - a cable extending through the passage of each segment;
  - a device for tightening the cable, thereby causing the mating segments to be brought into tight frictional engagement and compressing the plating material; and
  - a tissue stabilization device attached to the articulating arm, the stabilization device being lockable upon tightening the cable.
2. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein each segment is defined by a convex outer wall and a concave inner surface.
3. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 2, wherein the convex outer wall of the first segment engages the concave inner surface of the second segment.
4. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the material with high stiffness comprises stainless steel.
5. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the mating relationship exists between each segment.
6. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the high friction plating material is softer than the material with high stiffness.

7. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the high friction plating material is selected from the group consisting of nickel, gold, silver, copper, tin, and an elastomer.
8. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the high friction plating material comprises nickel.
9. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein during tightening of the cable, the high friction plating material of adjacent segments frictionally engages.
10. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, wherein the stabilization device is removably attached to the segmented arm support apparatus.
11. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 10, and further including a movable socket to receive the stabilization device.
12. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 11, wherein the movable socket is slidable along a plunger attached to an end of the cable.
13. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 12, wherein the movable socket is biased against the plunger by a spring.
14. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 1, and further including a mounting block for attachment to a retractor.
15. The segmented arm support apparatus of claim 14, the mounting block including a lever for positioning a cam to engage the retractor.

16. A method for stabilizing a localized area of tissue on a patient, comprising the steps of:

providing a segmented arm support apparatus including an articulating arm with a plurality of segments, each segment having an outer wall, an inner surface, and a passage for receiving a cable, the outer wall of a first segment in mating relationship with the inner surface of a second segment, each segment being formed of a material of high stiffness coated with a plating material;

providing a stabilization device attached to the articulating arm; and

tightening the cable so that the plating material of the first and second segments frictionally engages, thereby causing the stabilization device to lock.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the material of high stiffness comprises stainless steel.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the plating material is selected from the group consisting of nickel, gold, silver, copper, tin, and an elastomer.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the plating material comprises nickel.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein the stabilization device is removably attached to a socket in the articulating arm.

21. The method of claim 16, and further including a step of replacing the stabilization device by loosening the cable and removing the stabilization device from a socket.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the socket is biased against a plunger housing an end of the cable.

23. The method of claim 16, and further including a step of mounting the segmented arm support apparatus on a retractor.

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